

1-1-2007

# Constantine the Great and Christian Imperial Theocracy

Charles Matson Odahl

*Boise State University*

---

## Publication Information

Odahl, Charles Matson. (2007). "Constantine the Great and Christian Imperial Theocracy". *Connections: European Studies Annual Review*, 3, 89-113.

This document was originally published in *Connections: European Studies Annual Review* by Rocky Mountain European Scholars Consortium.  
Copyright restrictions may apply.

## Coda: Recovering Constantine's European Legacy

### Constantine the Great and Christian Imperial Theocracy

Charles Matson Odahl, Boise State University<sup>1</sup>

From his Christian conversion under the influence of revelatory experiences outside Rome in A.D. 312 until his burial as the thirteenth Apostle at Constantinople in 337, Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor of the Roman world, initiated the role of and set the model for Christian imperial theocracy. Through his relationship with the Christian Divinity, his study of the Bible and apologia with leading Catholic intellectuals, and his assessments of divine interventions in imperial history, the emperor came to feel that he had been placed in power by the Almighty God of Christianity, that he had been chosen as a special servant of that God, and that he had been entrusted with a mission to protect the Catholic Church in the empire and to propagate the Christian faith throughout the world. This article surveys the reign of the first Christian emperor and examines how he developed the role of the Christian imperial theocrat in his public letters and imperial actions, how Lactantius in the west and Eusebius in the east codified that role in their writings

to and about Constantine, and how the role pioneered by him in Late Antiquity served as a model for Byzantine emperors in eastern Europe and for medieval kings in western Europe over the next millennium. Illustrations from the Roman, Byzantine, and medieval periods reveal how the con-

cept of imperial theocracy was conveyed in contemporary art (Illustration 1).

Although Constantine had been raised as a tolerant pagan polytheist and had propagated several Olympian divinities, particularly Jupiter, Hercules, Mars, and Sol, as divine patrons during the early years of his reign as emperor over the Gallic, British, and Hispanic provinces (306–12), it was during his military campaign to wrest control of the Italic and North African provinces from an imperial usurper that he turned to the Christian religion and its sacred talismans for aid (312).<sup>2</sup>

Constantine knew that his enemy Maxentius had rebuffed several attempts by previous generals to overthrow him, that Maxentius had more troops in Italy for his defense than he could bring from Gaul for his offense, and that the usurper was employing many pagan rites to gain divine support. Recalling that several recent emperors, who had worshipped the Olympian gods and persecuted the Christian

Church, had died miserable deaths and failed to destroy Christianity, the emperor felt that he needed more powerful support than human forces and traditional religion might offer him. He therefore raised his eyes to the sky and implored the *Deus Summus*, the Highest Divinity of the cosmos, in



Ill. 1 Fourth century marble statue of *Constantine the Augustus* depicting the emperor standing in a military pose (originally in the Constantinian baths on the Quirinal Hill, but since the seventeenth century in the narthex of San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome, ca. 315).

prayer for aid and power in his time of trial. Constantine later confessed under oath to his biographer, Eusebius of Caesarea, that he had received answers to his entreaty in the form of revelations. He swore that “he saw with his own eyes in the heavens a trophy of the cross arising from the light of the sun, carrying the message ‘Conquer by this’” (*Hoc signo victor eris* in the original Latin of the emperor, but *Touto nika* in the Greek translation of Eusebius). He went on to report that Christ appeared to him that night in a dream and encouraged him to use the sacred signs of the Christian faith as defensive talismans for his army. Constantine questioned the Christians in his train concerning the nature of their God and the efficacy of his symbols. He was informed that the name

and cross of Christ had long been employed by the faithful to overpower demons and overcome death. He decided to put his trust and his fate in the power of the Christian Divinity, he ordered his workmen to make a new Christian war standard in the shape of a cross and marked with the monogram of Christ, *chi* and *rho* intertwined), and to commit his army to battle in this manner. Inspired by his celestial revelations and encouraged by their Christian emblems, the emperor and his troops routed the usurper and his forces north of Rome at the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge on 28 October 312. His climactic victory convinced Constantine that he had made



III. 2 The Mulvian Bridge on the Tiber above Rome where Constantine defeated Maxentius.



III. 3 and 4 Fourth century bronze coins recalling the revelations of Constantine with the emperor holding a Christian war standard within the *HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS* inscription, and an angel marking a shield with the Christogram (Odahl collection, 351 and 383).



the right choice for a divine patron, and he should direct his religious loyalty to this Divinity in the future (Ills. 2, 3 & 4).<sup>3</sup>

Eusebius later reported that the revelatory experiences and military victory of Constantine induced him to consult the clergy, to read the Bible in order to learn more about the mysteries of his new faith, and to bring Christian leaders into his imperial entourage as advisors on Christian practices and Church issues.<sup>4</sup> Two ecclesiastical leaders who gained the ear of the new imperial convert at this time were well known figures in the western church. Bishop Ossius of Cordova appears to have been among the clergy who had traveled with Constantine on his Italian campaign and explained to him the meaning of Christian signs. Ossius was a man of high morality and great learning and was widely respected in both the Christian church and Roman society. A new Latin translation of Plato's *Timaeus* was dedicated to him, and he seems to have been well versed in both classical philosophy and Christian theology. He probably mentioned to the emperor that the Platonic concept of a first and second deity was somewhat similar to the Christian belief in God the Father and his Son the Word and how this similarity might be employed in converting pagans to Christianity. He probably also directed Constantine's initial readings in the Bible and suggested to him what duties the Christian Divinity expected a pious ruler to perform. As his name appeared in contemporary imperial letters and laws concerning Christianity, he clearly advised the emperor on the episcopal organization and ethical practices of the Church and assisted him in distributing patronage to and adjudicating disputes among Christians. He traveled with Constantine and stayed in the court circle for the next fourteen years (312–26). During his short stay in the old capital, the emperor also made the acquaintance of Bishop Miltiades of Rome (311–14) and learned how he was considered to be the successor of Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and was seen as the nominal head of the episcopal hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Reasoning that such an important Christian leader should have a residence appropriate to his status, Constantine ceded the Lateran Palace from imperial estates at the eastern edge of the city to the Roman See, and ordered the construction of a cathedral church for the bishop and his flock next to the palace. Contemporary letters show the emperor referred the adjudication of a hierarchical schism in the African church to Miltiades, and the bishop

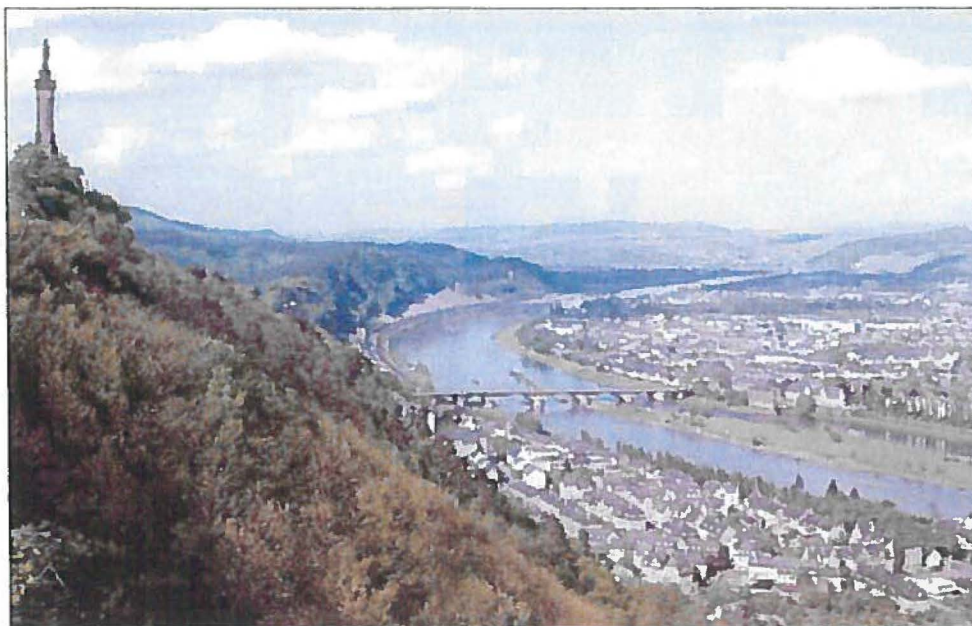
hosted a synod for that purpose in his new residence. It was men such as Ossius and Miltiades who advised the imperial convert in discerning the tenets of Christianity and in advancing the status of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

After meeting his co-emperor Licinius early in the year 313 to work out their empire-wide policy of religious tolerance known as the "Edict of Milan" and encouraging him to march east and depose Maximin Daia, the last imperial persecutor of the Christians, Constantine carried out a short campaign against German barbarians on the Rhine River, and returned to his northwestern imperial residence at Trier in Gaul the following summer. With the recovery of political, military, and cultural stability across the empire as a result of the alliance and victories of Constantine and Licinius, the senior Augustus was afforded the luxury of residing at his court in Trier for many months at a time during the next two years.<sup>6</sup>

Study with a Christian apologist and interactions with the Church hierarchy stimulated Constantine to develop a personal sense of mission toward Christianity and to formulate a theory of Christian imperial theocracy for himself. Lactantius was the Christian scholar with whom the emperor studied at Trier. He was a famous classical scholar and Christian apologist, who had served as the official professor of rhetoric in the eastern capital of Nicomedia before the Great Persecution (303–13). However, he had lost his position and wandered the empire writing a seven-book defense of Christianity entitled the *Divinae Institutiones* before he was invited to Trier to serve as the tutor for Crispus, the son of Constantine. He dedicated his *magnum opus* to the emperor, when he arrived in Gaul in the autumn of 313, and composed two important polemical tracts *De Ira Dei* and *De Mortibus Persecutorum* while teaching there for several years. Constantine's contemporary and subsequent use of Lactantian themes and language in his own imperial compositions make it evident that he, as well as his son, studied with the old Christian *magister* (Ill. 5).<sup>7</sup>

The *Divine Institutes* offered a lengthy curriculum for the Christian education of Constantine. At the start, Lactantius invoked the "one God . . . who both created all things and governs them with the same power by which he created them." He described the Christian Deity as the "eternal mind" of the cosmos and characterized him as a heavenly "general" who maintains balance in the universe as a supreme commander keeps order on the battlefield—an





III. 5 Aerial view of Trier situated on the right bank of the Moselle River in ancient Gaul.

analogy which the newly converted soldier emperor could appreciate.<sup>8</sup> The first three books offered a detailed critique of the false beliefs and cultic practices of pagan religion and philosophy, while the next three books provided a long exposition of the true theology and ethical standards of Christian religion and learning. In the final book, Lactantius covered the second coming of Christ and the immortality of the soul. Therein, he added an effusive dedication to Constantine, which not only complimented the personal virtue of the emperor but also described the divine sanction for his rule. In part, it reads:

*Most holy emperor, . . . the Highest God has raised you up for the restoration of the house of justice, and for the protection of the human race; for while you rule the Roman state, we worshippers of God are no more regarded as accursed and impious. . . . The providence of the Supreme Divinity has lifted you to the imperial dignity in order that you might be able with true piety to rescind the injurious decrees of others, to correct faults, to provide with a father's clemency for the safety of humanity—in short, to remove the wicked from the state, whom . . . God has delivered into your hands that it might be evident to all in what true majesty consists.*

Truly they who wished to take away the worship of the heavenly and matchless God, that they might defend impious superstitions, lie in ruin. But you who defend and love his name, excelling in virtue and prosperity,

enjoy your immortal glories with the greatest joy. . . . The powerful right hand of God protects you from all dangers. . . . *And not undeservedly has the Lord and Ruler of the world chosen you in preference to all others to renew his holy religion.* . . . For you, both by the innate sanctity of your character, and by the acknowledgment of the truth and of God in every action, do fully perform works of righteousness. *Therefore, it was fitting that in arranging the condition of the human race, the Divinity should make use of your authority and service.* We supplicate him with daily prayers that he may especially guard you whom he wished to be the guardian of the world. . . .<sup>9</sup>

These words fulfilled predictions Lactantius had made earlier in this long tome and confirmed events that Constantine had experienced in his career. Reflecting the Old Testament tradition that God could use human agents to accomplish his purposes, and the Pauline teaching that rulers are put in power by the Deity to punish evil doers and provide some order in society, the old apologist had warned the pagan emperors that their sovereignty had been granted by God, and if they abused this trust, divine vengeance would follow. Having risen to power during the decade of the "Great Persecution," Constantine had witnessed each of the emperors, who had persecuted the Christians, come to ruin. The fact that only he and his eastern colleague Licinius, both of whom had stopped the persecutions and were protecting Christians under their "Edict of Milan" religious tolerance policy, remained



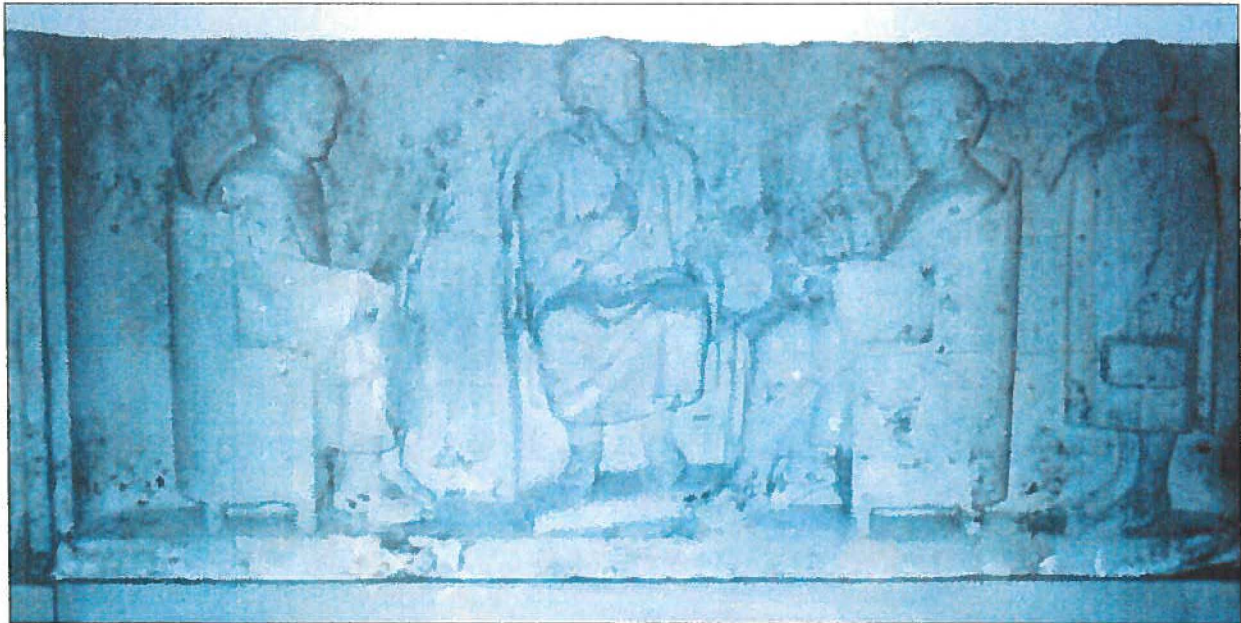
in power and ruled in prosperity seemed to confirm Christian teachings.<sup>10</sup> Constantine certainly studied this considerable tome over the years and drew inspiration from it for his own writings about his faith in the true God, and his role as a Christian ruler.<sup>11</sup>

The two other short works that Lactantius completed at Trier focused on key themes of immediate interest and value to the emperor. In his tract *On the Anger of God*, he posited that there were three steps to ultimate truth: 1) recognize the fallacy of the pagan religions and reject their impious worship of man-made gods; 2) perceive with the mind that there is but one Supreme God, whose power and providence made the world in the beginning and govern it still; and 3) come to know God's Servant and messenger, who was sent as his ambassador to the earth and by whose teaching humanity is freed from error and discerns righteousness.<sup>12</sup>

Constantine had already reached the second step of this ascent to the truth and was diligently striving toward the third through his studies. Herein, he read that the Christian Deity loved good and hated evil; and through kind benevolence rewarded the pious who worshipped correctly and lived justly but out of righteous anger punished the impious who rejected true religion and just conduct.<sup>13</sup> In his tract *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, Lactantius provided historical proofs for the theses he had put forth in the *Divinae Institutiones* and in the *De Ira Dei*. He chronicled in gory detail the divine vengeance

inflicted upon the imperial persecutors of the Church, and the divine favor extended to the imperial protectors of the Christians. The failed reigns and miserable deaths of persecuting emperors were contrasted with the successful reigns and wonderful lives of tolerant rulers and reinforced the theory that earthly power is a gift from the Christian God and that those who misuse it should expect divine wrath.<sup>14</sup> Constantine may have contributed historical data to his tutor for this work and was later to employ themes from it in his own writings.<sup>15</sup>

From his readings in the Bible, his conversations with Church leaders, and especially his studies with Lactantius, Constantine was swiftly gaining detailed knowledge about his new divine protector and his new religious society. He was learning that the Christian Deity was not just the Highest Divinity, but "the one and only God," and the Catholic Church was not just another religious cult, but the ultimate "fountain of truth, abode of faith, and temple of God."<sup>16</sup> He was discerning that God had communicated his will to humans indirectly and partially through the writings of the Jewish prophets and the pagan philosophers, but directly and fully through the teachings of Jesus the Christ and his apostolic followers.<sup>17</sup> From personal revelations and recent events, he sensed that the Almighty could intervene in human history and felt he had received a special commission to be an earthly agent of the divine dispensation. He concluded that if he were to be worthy of the power the Divinity had given him, he



Ill. 6 An ancient relief sculpture from Roman Gaul depicting a *magister* instructing his students as Lactantius did Crispus and Constantine (Landesmuseum, Trier).

would have to protect the Catholic Church and promote the Christian religion in the Roman world (III. 6).

In carrying out actions toward these ends, Constantine began to initiate the role and set the model for Christian imperial theocracy. Following his victory at Rome, he sent out letters to western provincial officials and episcopal leaders ordering the restitution of property the churches had lost during the persecutions, offering monetary subventions to the bishops for the building of churches (in a list drawn up by Ossius), and giving exemptions from public services to the Catholic clergy (so that they would not be distracted from rendering proper reverence to the Deity). By such actions, the emperor was giving Christianity a special position in Roman law and bestowing imperial largess upon his new favored cult.<sup>18</sup>

While the imperial *beneficia* were being distributed in North Africa, it became evident that a hierarchical schism had developed there during the "Great Persecution" between moderate and rigorist factions in the church for control of the archiepiscopal see at Carthage. The Catholics, led by Bishop Caecilian, were receiving the imperial favors, but a schismatic faction soon to be known as the Donatists (named for their contentious leader Donatus) were claiming to be the "true Church," and appealed through imperial officials to Constantine for recognition and legitimacy.<sup>19</sup> Following the Christian traditions about which he was being instructed, the emperor at first referred the dispute to the Roman Bishop Miltiades for adjudication. When their accusation that Caecilian had received an improper episcopal consecration was rejected by a Roman synod held in late 313, the Donatists appealed over the heads of Miltiades and several bishops at Rome to the emperor again. Constantine was not pleased but responded in a manner which he thought would be beneficial to both the Christian Church and to the Roman Empire—he summoned bishops and other clergy from the major sees of the western provinces to meet in Arles for a full council of the western church in August of 314. He sent epistles to the Christian bishops of his domains, whose attendance he requested, and to the imperial vicars over his dioceses, whose assistance he commanded for travel services. Two of these letters are still extant: the "Epistle of Constantine the Augustus to Chrestus, Bishop of Syracuse," preserved in a Greek translation by Eusebius, and the "Epistle of Constantine the Augustus to Aelafius, Vicar of Africa," recorded in the original Latin by Optatus.<sup>20</sup> In both, the emperor expressed his dismay over the ecclesiastical

schism in Africa, reviewed his attempt to solve it, and stated his disappointment at the continuing contentions in the Church. He stressed his hope that the council of the many might accomplish what a synod of the few had failed to do—settle the dissension in the Church and restore harmony among the faithful. The vicarial epistle contains a personal confession at the end which clearly illustrates Constantine's developing sense of divine sanction for his personal rule, and the emerging theory of imperial theocracy for the Roman Empire:

For since I am sure that you also are a worshiper of the Highest God, I confess to your dignity that I think that it is not at all right that contentions and altercations of this kind be ignored by us, by which perhaps *the Highest Divinity may be moved to wrath* not only against the human race but even *against me myself, to whose care by his celestial will he has committed the management of all earthly affairs*, and having been angered, might determine things other than heretofore. *For then truly and most fully shall I be able to be secure and always to hope for the most prosperous and best things from the very prompt benevolence of the Most Powerful Deity, when I shall have perceived that all people are venerating the Most Holy God by means of the proper cult of the Catholic religion with harmonious brotherhood of worship. Amen.*

The feeling that he was the recipient of divine benevolence from the Christian Deity and fear that he could lose divine favor by failing to protect the Catholic Church would be essential elements of the religious thinking and imperial policies of Constantine for the rest of his reign.<sup>21</sup>

In August of 314, thirty-three bishops with numerous lesser clergy from the Dioceses of Britanniae, Galliae, Viennensis, Hispaniae, Africa, and Italia gathered for the Council of Arles. Eusebius later recorded that Constantine "like some general bishop constituted by God . . . did not disdain to be present and sit with them in their assembly, but even bore a share in their deliberations, working in every way for the peace of God." The council ratified the earlier Roman decision, accepted Caecilian and the Catholics against Donatus and the schismatics as the legitimate church in Africa, and enacted twenty-two canons concerning ecclesiastical order and discipline—including some for the first time allowing the Christian laity to serve in the Roman government and army. Constantine was pleased with the work of the council and sent a warm letter of thanks to each of the participating bishops (III. 7).<sup>22</sup>





III. 7 Aerial view over Roman Arles along the Rhone River in southern Gaul where Constantine convened and participated in the Council of Arles (August 314).

After more chicanery by the Donatists and judicial investigations by provincial authorities, Constantine handed down a final ruling a couple of years later against the schismatics and confined imperial beneficence to Catholics for the rest of his reign. In an imperial missive to Celsus, the vicar of North Africa for part of this time, he expressed his growing sense of mission to serve the Divinity whom he believed had given him supreme temporal power:

What more ought to be done by me in accord with my purpose and my duty as the *princeps* than that after errors have been dispersed and all rashness has been removed, I may cause all people to proffer true religion and harmonious simplicity and merited worship to the Almighty God?

Although the emperor's involvement in the schism did not immediately end the dissensions in the African church, it did set a precedent for Church-state relations: Christians had appealed to Constantine about an organizational issue; clergy had been summoned to a council hosted by

the head of state; and the Church largely accepted the emperor's involvement in and ruling on their internal affairs. The church was becoming a partner with the Roman state and the emperor was becoming an agent of the Christian God.<sup>23</sup>

In the epistle to the bishops present at the Council of Arles, Constantine used terms such as *fratres carissimi* ("dearest brothers") and *Deus noster* ("our God") and *Salvator noster* ("our Savior"), and he called himself the *famulus Dei* ("servant of God")--indicating his familiarity with terminology particular to Christianity.<sup>24</sup> When he returned to Rome for the beginning of the tenth anniversary of his reign in the summer of 315, he displayed his emerging political theology and growing missionary zeal in very public and material ways.<sup>25</sup> He had special silver medallions produced at the northern Italian mint of Ticinum, which he distributed to officials and supporters in Rome for his *Decennalia* (Ills. 8 & 9).

While the reverse motif honored the horse soldiers who had played a decisive role in his victorious Italian





III. 8 Aerial view over the core of ancient Rome with the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum in the left foreground, the Palatine Hill and Roman Forum above those, and St. Peter's Basilica in the upper left across the Tiber River.



III. 9a and b The Ticinum silver medallion for the *Decennalia* of Constantine, depicting the emperor with a Christogram badge on his helmet and cross scepter in his hand on the obverse, and addressing his horse soldiers on the reverse (Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich, 315).

campaign three years earlier, the more important obverse motif carried Christian symbolism for the first time on imperial coinage and illustrated his changed religious orientation. Within the inscription IMP CONSTANTINUS P F AUG (the Emperor Constantine the Pious and Happy Augustus), Constantine was depicted in a rare frontal portrait wearing a high-crested war helmet, holding his

horse with one hand, and holding a shield and scepter in the other. At the top front of his helmet was a badge marked with the Christogram symbol, and protruding above the shield was a Christian cross topped with a globe. The monogram was the sacred sign for the *nomen Christi*, which the emperor had employed since his conversion to invoke the power of the Christian Deity. The globular cross

scepter was a novel symbol devised by the emperor and his advisors to illustrate the new political theory of Christian imperial theocracy emerging at court. By allowing himself to be depicted in this manner, Constantine was showing in art what he was writing in words—that the Christian Deity was the creator of the terrestrial world and the bestower of imperial power, and that the Christian emperor served as the divinely sanctioned imperial agent of the Almighty God on earth.<sup>26</sup>

In mentioning the *Decennalia* festival, Eusebius recorded that Constantine declined to attend “sacrifices [of] flame and smoke” at the pagan temples but instead “offered prayers of thanksgiving to God” in a Christian church.<sup>27</sup> The latter probably occurred in the nearly finished *Basilica Constantiniana*, which he had ordered to be erected as a cathedral church for the Roman bishop on the imperial Lateran estate at the eastern end of the city three years earlier. It was being constructed as a great longitudinal hall with a high central nave terminating in an apse, with lower double side aisles running alongside the nave and sacristies projecting out like transeptal arms just below the apse. It was an impressive public edifice where the bishop could meet with several thousand of his flock for worship. It would later be dedicated to the two Johns of the Gospels

and has long been known as *San Giovanni in Laterano*. Pope Sylvester, the new Bishop of Rome (314–35), was undoubtedly delighted to guide the imperial convert through the basilica and to suggest he construct other churches at Rome in honor of its Christian martyrs. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* and archaeological data, Constantine and his family complied generously with the papal suggestion and eventually constructed eight Christian basilicas in and around the old capital. The ancient *Basilica Beato Petro Apostolo* beyond the west end of Rome, and the original *Basilica Beato Paulo Apostolo* to the south of the city, focused on the tombs of the Apostles—now *San Pietro in Vaticano* and *San Paolo fuori le Mura*—are the most famous. Averaging about one hundred meters in length and lavishly decorated, capable of holding thousands of the faithful for worship services and funerary banquets, these eight magnificent Constantinian houses of worship initiated the transformation of old Rome from an ancient pagan capital to the medieval Apostolic See (Ill. 10).<sup>28</sup>

Constantine’s idea of a divinely sanctioned imperial agent of the Christian God would be tested and expanded over the next decade (315–325). The political alliance and religious agreement Constantine and Licinius had established in 312–13 gradually broke down as they quarreled



ILL. 10 An engraving by Antonio Lafréri of the seven pilgrimage churches of medieval Rome, with *San Giovanni*, *Santa Croce*, and *Santa Maria Maggiore* within the walls, and counterclockwise from the bottom *San Pietro*, *San Paolo*, *San Sebastiano*, and *San Lorenzo* outside the walls—with six of them dating to the Constantinian Period and illustrating the Christianization of Rome under Constantine (Vatican Library, 1575).



over political dominance and religious policies. First, they fell out over the appointment of a Caesar in Italy and fought two battles by which Constantine gained control of the Illyrian and Balkan provinces (316–17).<sup>29</sup> They then carried on a cold war over religion, with Constantine expanding his support for Christianity and Licinius affirming his loyalty to paganism. The former removed the pagan gods from his coins and allowed the use of Christian symbols thereupon, while the latter emphasized his relationship with Jupiter and kept Christian signs off his coinage. Constantine continued building Christian churches in his domains and supporting Christianity in Roman law—allowing bishops to arbitrate cases appealed from secular courts, making Sunday a legal holiday for worship, and promoting the manumission of slaves in churches. Licinius continued patronizing pagan rituals across his regions, and reviving persecution of Christians in his legislation—preventing bishops from traveling to synods, forbidding family worship in churches, and dismissing Christians from civil and military positions (318–23).<sup>30</sup> When Constantine marched into Licinian territory in Thrace to defeat some marauding barbarians,

and Licinius allowed the martyrdoms of some Christians in Anatolia, their cold war turned hot, and both sides prepared for civil war to determine whether the empire was going to be dominated by Constantine and Christianity or by Licinius and paganism (323–24).<sup>31</sup>

With massive land and sea forces positioned at the eastern tip of Europe, the western edge of Asia, and in the waters between the continents, a virtual crusade was waged in a religious environment of apocalyptic finality. Constantine commanded his troops as the imperial agent of the Christian Divinity, with Christian symbolism emblazoned on his military standards and the Catholic clergy praying for the victory of their champion. Licinius headed his forces as the earthly representative of Olympian Jupiter, with pagan imagery erected amidst his army, and pagan priests performing cultic rites in honor of the traditional gods. In tough battles at Hadrianopolis in Thrace, at Callipolis in the Hellespont Strait, and at Chrysopolis in Bithynia during the summer of 324, Constantine triumphed over Licinius (Ill. 11).<sup>32</sup>

In the autumn following his triumph, Constantine took actions to ensconce his family as the ruling dynasty over



Ill. 11 Aerial view over Constantinople (Istanbul) and the Golden Horn to the northeast up the Bosphorus Strait (upper left) and east over to Chrysopolis (Üsküdar) in Bithynia (top center) where Constantine won his final victory over Licinius in September 324.



the Roman Empire and to establish his Christian faith as the favored religion in the Roman world. With himself thereafter serving as the sole *Augustus* and three of his sons holding the rank of *Caesar* under him, he created a Christian dynastic tetrarchy to govern the Roman state. At the same time, he honored his mother Helena and wife Fausta as *Augustae*, and began expanding the little Greco-Roman town of Byzantium

the possessor of almighty and eternal power . . .). *I myself, then, was the instrument whose services He chose, and esteemed suited for the accomplishment of his will. Thus, beginning at the remote Britannic Ocean . . . with the aid of divine power I banished and utterly removed every form of evil which prevailed in the hope that humanity, enlightened through my instrumentality,*



Ill. 12a and b Bronze coin of Constantine depicting the Christian Labarum piercing the great dragon and primeval serpent (the devil whom Licinius served) in an apocalyptic motif inspired by biblical prophecies (British Museum, Constantinople mint, 327).

on the European shore of the Bosphorus Strait into the votive city of Constantinople to commemorate his victory over Licinius and paganism (Ill. 12).<sup>33</sup>

During the winter of 324–25, Constantine dispatched edicts and letters to imperial officials and ecclesiastical leaders throughout the eastern provinces ordering the restitution of any property the churches had lost and the restoration of positions Christians had forfeited during the recent Licinian persecution; requesting the repair of old and the building of new houses of worship in the cities by the clergy with governmental subsidies and assistance; and prohibiting the use of pagan sacrifices and rites by imperial officials in the course of their official duties.<sup>34</sup> In the long “Edict of Restitution,” the emperor, more importantly, reviewed recent Roman history in Lactantian terms and expressed his personal view of his role as an imperial agent of the divine dispensation and special servant of the Christian God:

*And with such a mass of impiety oppressing the human race, and with the commonwealth in danger of being utterly destroyed . . . and thus needing powerful and effectual aid, what was the relief, what was the remedy which the Divinity devised for these evils? (and by Divinity is meant the One who is alone and truly God,*

*might be recalled to a due observance of the holy laws of God, and at the same time our most blessed faith might prosper under the guidance of his almighty hand.*

He indicated “this most excellent service” had been confided to him as “a special gift” and as “the servant of God,” it was his duty to convert the empire to the truth of Christianity.<sup>35</sup> In the apocalyptic climate of victory, Constantine seems to have tried to establish Christianity as the official religion of the Roman world. He appointed his fellow believers to top positions in the government, commanded a cessation of pagan rituals in public, and embarked on a church building campaign. To commemorate the triumph of his faith, he ordered the erection of a large tableau above the entry portico at his rising palace in Constantinople that depicted him using the Christian Labarum to pierce a great dragon, whose head plunged downward to the Abyss. The tableau has not survived, but coins minted shortly thereafter at his new capital represented it and reveal Constantine was convinced he was fulfilling apocalyptic prophecies about the destruction of the Devil, and the inauguration of the reign of the Saints upon the earth.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, he soon discovered that not all of the pagans in the empire were willing to follow his lead and

were creating disturbances in eastern cities. There were also arguments over the nature of their Deity and the dating of Easter. To deal with the former, he issued an "Edict on Religion" on the error of polytheism. He argued in Lactantian language that the laws of nature, the teachings of philosophers, and the events of history all pointed to the reality of the Christian God and to the truth of Christian teachings; and urged his subjects to join him in the "most holy house" of the one true Deity. However, as his readings in Pauline theology and his experiences in imperial politics had made him aware of the lack of perfection in humanity and of the advantages of peace in society, he was resigned to the fact that some of his subjects would never have the wisdom to undertake "the contest for immortality," and that efforts to compel them to accept his faith would only cause civil disorder. So, he pulled back from a prohibition on all pagan rituals and allowed that part of fallen humanity which did not have the strength to shake off the yoke of old habits to retain their "groves of falsehood." He made it fully clear that Christianity would henceforth be the favored religion of the Roman Empire, and—as the special servant of the Almighty God—he would expend imperial resources to promote the Catholic Church in Roman society. Yet, he also would allow the less offensive forms of pagan practices to continue in the peace and tranquility of the new era. He hoped in this way to lessen the popularity of paganism and to heighten the attraction of Christianity. The profound piety and pragmatic politics expressed by Constantine in this edict resulted in a religious policy that largely achieved his goals by the end of his reign.<sup>37</sup>

To deal with the disputes among his Christian brethren, he called an ecumenical council of the Church to meet at his mountain lakeside palace at Nicaea in northern Bithynia in June 325. The major controversy was theological and focused upon the relationship of Christ the Son to God the Father in the Triune Deity of Christianity. Arius, a priest of the Alexandrian church in Egypt, had maintained that Christ was born in time, was a mutable creature, who did not fully share in the divine essence, and thus should be seen as subordinate to the Father. Alexander, his bishop, had opposed this teaching, asserting that Christ was the eternal Word of God, shared fully in the divine essence, and therefore should be worshipped as equal to the Father. Both Arius and Alexander had appealed to episcopal leaders outside of Egypt for support for their positions, and they had divided the faithful on this central issue of Christianity by

the time Constantine had conquered the east. The Christian emperor also noticed that some Christians in Syria and Palestine were still holding the Easter festival according to a date in the Jewish calendar as opposed to the majority of the faithful who celebrated it as a movable feast based upon astronomical calculations. Upset that pagans were using these differences to deride his religion and his brethren, Constantine hosted some three hundred bishops and many more clergy in his summer palace at the Council of Nicaea to establish unity of belief and practice among Christians.<sup>38</sup>

In the letters which he had written to the bishops before the council, and in his address to them at the opening session, Constantine emphasized the need for common belief and brotherly harmony among the faithful. He rejoiced that the power of God our Savior had removed the impious hostility of the tyrants that had oppressed the Church. He lamented, however, that the Devil had inflicted Christianity with a much greater danger than external wars: internal dissent among the faithful. He expressed the wish that he might see them "all united in one judgment and in that common spirit of peace and concord . . . which becomes those consecrated to the service of God." He assured them that if they embraced the principle of peace, they would be acting in a way most pleasing to the Supreme God, and they would be conferring a great favor upon him, their fellow servant.<sup>39</sup> His wise words set a tone for the council which was difficult to resist. The majority of its participants viewed Constantine as a gift from God—an agent of divine anger against the persecutors of the church, and a propagator of the divine Word to the pagan world. Resisting a call for unity of doctrine and amity of fellowship from such a divinely inspired ruler seemed utterly perverse. Ossius was the official chair of the council, but Constantine participated in its sessions and used his imperial authority and personal charisma to keep the discussions as polite as possible. Though the radicals on either side got to fully argue their positions (Eustathius of Antioch for divine equality, and Eusebius of Nicomedia for Christological subordinationism), the turning point came when Constantine persuaded Eusebius of Caesarea, the leading theologian of the east, to accept a creed containing the phrase "of the same substance" (*homoousios* in Greek, and *consubstantialis* in Latin) to describe the spiritual equality of the Father and the Son. All but two of the bishops at the council signed the Nicene Creed as the official statement of belief for the Catholic Church of the Roman Empire, while Arius and his two supporters were sent into exile as heretics.



As most of the bishops present at the council were Roman patriots and Christian zealots like their imperial champion, they likewise agreed to Constantine's suggestion of avoiding the Jewish method for dating Easter, and accepted the western tradition of celebrating their most important festival on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox—honoring the day Christ had arisen rather than the date. The twenty canons passed by the bishops at the end of the council helped order and unify the practices of the church so that it could be a more efficient institution and a better partner with the Roman state. As Constantine

oversaw early construction work at Constantinople and issued legislation he felt would elevate Roman morality in line with Christian standards. For example, he outlawed gladiatorial combats and strengthened laws on pre-marital chastity, abduction-rape, marriage, and adultery. Unfortunately, he may have been caught in a trap relating to his own laws. When the imperial family was in Italy to participate in a festival to be staged at Rome for the end of the vicennial year, his second wife Fausta seems to have accused his adult son Crispus (from his deceased first wife) of some kind of sexual crime. Constantine overreacted and ordered his son

III. 13 A view from the city walls over the site of the imperial summer palace beside the lake at the west end of the Roman city where the Council of Nicaea was held in June 325.



departed Nicaea in July 325, he rightly sensed that he had achieved his goals: he had defeated his political enemies, had unified his Christian brethren, and was ruling a united Roman Empire as the agent of the one true Divinity whom he believed had brought him to the apex of earthly power (III. 13).<sup>40</sup>

Over the last dozen years of his rule, Constantine would administer the emerging Christian empire he was constructing across the Roman world largely from favored imperial residences in the east (325–37).<sup>41</sup> Some of his major accomplishments in these years were the dedication of his new eponymous capital beside the Bosphorus, the reconquest of territory above the Danube, and a magnificent celebration for his long and successful reign in a tricennial festival at Constantinople. This era began well with a joyous festival staged for the beginning of his vicennial year in mid-July at Nicomedia and with a grand banquet for the Christian bishops whom he had unified at Nicaea.<sup>42</sup> Through the course of the next year, he

put to death. Yet, when Constantine's mother, Helena, seems to have discovered that her beloved grandson, whom she had largely raised had been innocent, she demanded retribution upon Fausta. Constantine agreed and forced his wife to commit suicide in the palace baths. Fausta had thus cleared the way to the succession for her young sons, but at the cost of her own life and with a terrible scandal for the Christian imperial family.<sup>43</sup>

Stunned by these events, Constantine and his extended family strengthened their fidelity to the Christian God and expanded their patronage to the Catholic Church in efforts to offer suitable atonement and to maintain divine support for their wounded dynasty. The emperor issued Christian coin types and dedicated Christian basilicas while he was in Rome during the *Vicennalia*.<sup>44</sup> Soon thereafter, both Helena and Eutropia, the mother of Fausta, undertook ostentatious pilgrimages to Palestine, apparently in order to distract attention from the scandal by visiting holy sites, doing



charity work and distributing donatives, and by praying for the welfare of Constantine and his remaining sons. By their exertions, the imperial ladies seem to have restored a patina of piety to the Constantinian Dynasty (326–28).<sup>45</sup>

Because of the dynastic tragedy in Italy, Constantine could not bear to visit Rome again. After installing Constantine II, his oldest son from Fausta, as a Caesar at Trier to oversee the western provinces for him (328), he concentrated on administering the eastern provinces and on constructing a new capital. For several years, he had been rebuilding little Greco-Roman Byzantium into a votive offering to the Christian God for his victory over Licinius and paganism. After deciding to be buried there, he also resolved to expand it into a great new Christian capital for the east, a *Nova Roma* that would rival the size and glory of *Roma Antiqua* in the west.<sup>46</sup> Situated on the western side of the Bosphorus Strait separating Europe from Asia, Byzantium was centrally located at the nexus of the rich trade routes running from Thrace to Anatolia and from the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea. It provided swift access to the endangered military frontiers along the Danube River in eastern Europe and out to the Euphrates River in the Near East. And, very important to the increasingly zealous Constantine, it was situated in a heavily Christianized area of the empire, making it potentially easier to transform from a pagan town to

a Christian capital than the city along the Tiber. He had insisted that the old sacrifices at the temples be stopped and that the statues of the pagan gods be altered into poses of Christian prayer. He had ordered that many of the structures of old Rome be duplicated in his new Rome—a *magnum palatium* for the imperial family and government officials, a *hippodrome* chariot racing track for public entertainment, and a grand *augusteion* surrounded by a senatorial curia, a judicial basilica and thermal baths were constructed over the core of Byzantium; but unlike the old capital, where his churches had been built at the edges or beyond the walls of the city, here he constructed the patriarchal palace for the new capital, and the double cathedral of *Hagia Sophia* and *Hagia Eirene* directly across the *augusteion* from the imperial palace (Ill. 14).

Constantine designated that a defensive wall be constructed two miles to the west of the old boundary of Byzantium, more than quadrupling its size. Running east to west and north to south in the new areas were grand avenues connecting the various regions of the city, with fora, fountains, baths, and churches placed strategically between the mansions and apartments constructed for its citizens. Set on the second hill of the city was the *Forum of Constantine*, which, like that for the “good emperor” Trajan at Rome, had a triumphal column in its center commemorating the *victor* over



Ill. 14 Aerial of Constantinople with the hippodrome to the left of the Blue Mosque which sits over the ancient palace site and the Cathedral of *Hagia Sophia* above the Mosque.

the enemies of imperial order and the *structor* of the capital of the Christian empire. Situated just inside the defensive wall on the fourth and highest hill of the city was the church of *Hagioi Apostoloi*, where the emperor had ordered that twelve pillars in honor of the Apostles be set up in a circle under the central dome of the structure with a sarcophagus placed in their midst for his final resting place so he would be identified with them as a servant of the true God.<sup>47</sup>

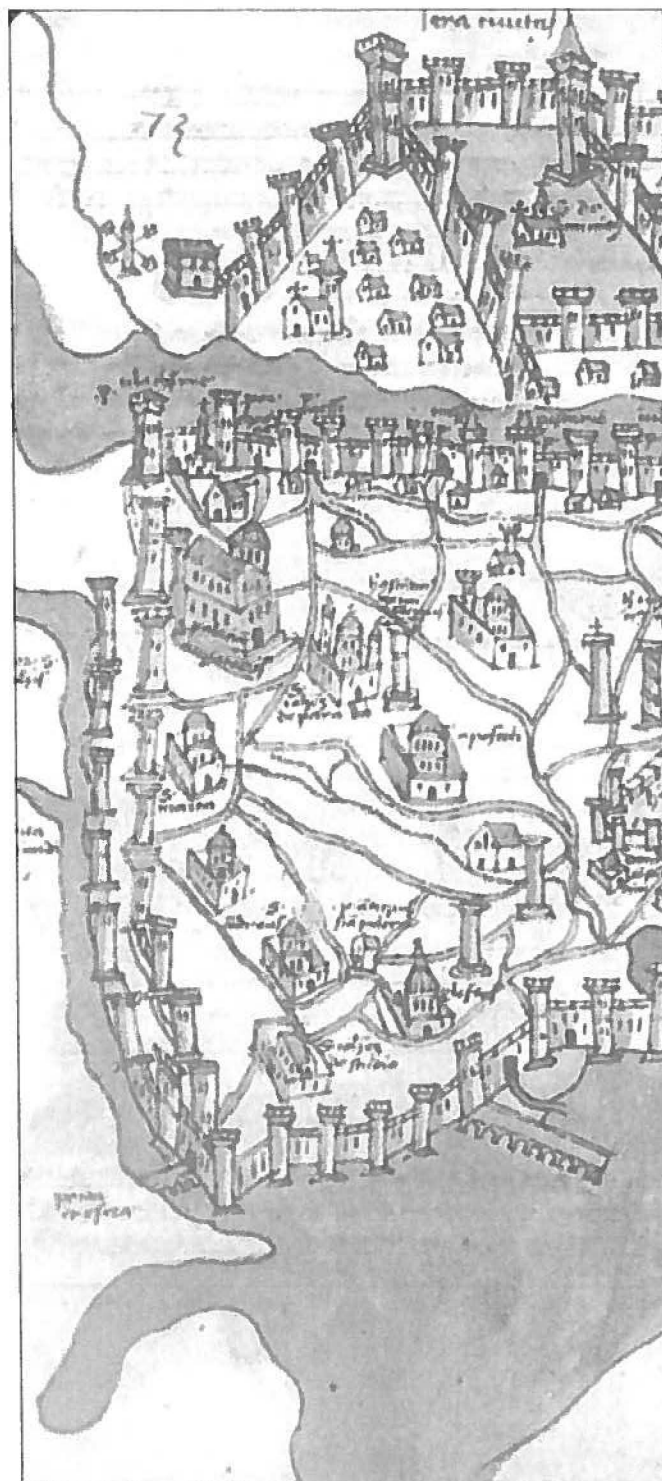
Construction in the city had progressed enough that the emperor presided over its official *dedicatio* on 11 May 330, the feast day of the Christian martyr Saint Mocius. Eusebius noted that Constantine “purged the city from idolatry of every kind” and consecrated it to the “God of the martyrs.” The formal ceremonies were held at the hippodrome with the emperor accepting acclamations in his imperial box and the people receiving donatives in the stadium—probably the coins minted for the occasion with the personification of the city holding a cross scepter on the obverse and a Victory with shield on a prow on the reverse.<sup>48</sup>

Ill. 15a and b Constantinople *dedicatio* coin with personification of the city holding a cross scepter on the obverse, and a Victory with shield on a prow on the reverse (Odahl collection, 330).



standing on a prow on the reverse, indicating that *Nova Roma—Constantinopolis* was a Christian city set beside the sea (Ills. 15 & 16).<sup>48</sup>

In the later years of his reign, Constantine led three successful military campaigns along the Danube between 332 and 336, defeating Sarmatians and Goths, settling



Ill. 16 The oldest extant map of Constantinople by the medieval Italian traveler Buondelmonte, depicting the eastern capital with its walls, hippodrome, churches, and columns between the Golden Horn inlet above, the Sea of Marmora below, and the Bosphorus Strait to the upper right (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, 1420).



philosophy, and recent history, Eusebius elucidated the conviction Constantine had long held that he was a special agent of the Christian Deity and that he had a religious mission to convert the Roman Empire (Ill. 19).

Many modern scholars have credited Eusebius with being the creator of the Christian and Byzantine political theory variously labeled caesaropapism, political theology, or—as more correctly here—Christian imperial theocracy. In reality, as this survey of Constantine's writings and actions have revealed, it was the emperor himself who created this theory and acted upon it. His experiences of divine revelations, his readings in Christian literature, his dealings with Catholic bishops, and his interpretations of imperial history had convinced him that the Christian Deity was the creator of the terrestrial world and bestower of earthly power, and that the Christian emperor was the agent of the true God and the protector of the Christian faith. The role of Eusebius in the creation of Christian political theory was to codify Constantine's thinking and actions and to preserve them for history.<sup>57</sup>

In the following spring, Constantine became seriously ill, underwent baptism, and became a full member of the religious faith he had so long protected and propagated. He died 22 May 337, on the day of Pentecost, the festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles—empowering them to begin the evangelization of the Roman Empire for Christ. It could not have been a more appropriate day for the death of the first Christian emperor, who truly believed he

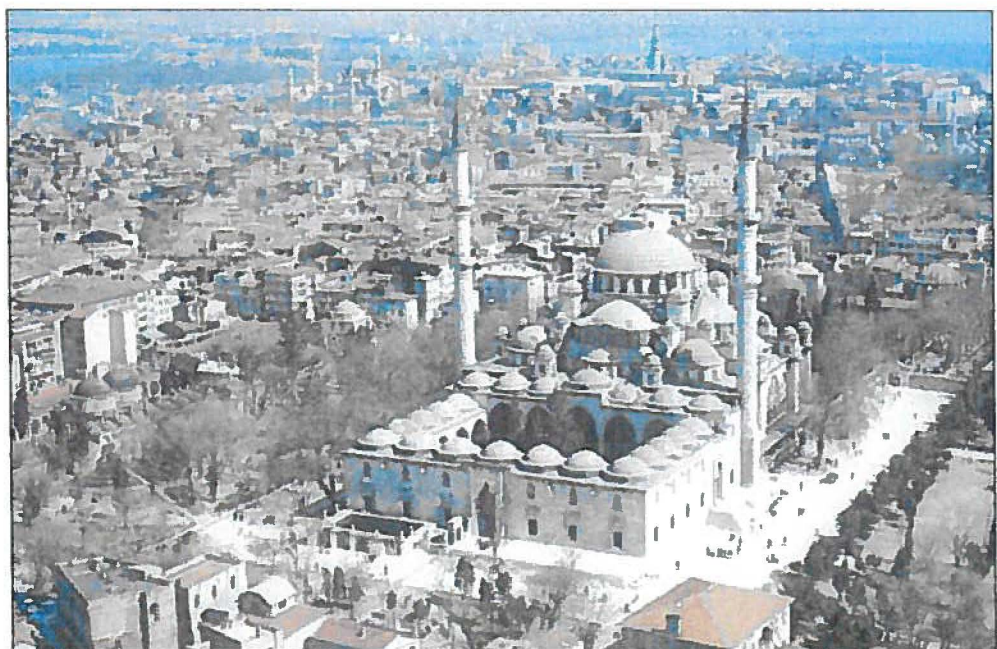
had been chosen to complete the conversion of the Roman world to Christianity. As he had wished, he was laid to rest in the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, and soon became known as the thirteenth Apostle. His passing was commemorated by his sons with a coin motif depicting him flying heavenward in a chariot with the hand of God beckoning him to his celestial reward (Ill. 20).<sup>58</sup>

Eusebius, who survived Constantine by two years, added the detailed biography of the sovereign's pious life in the *Vita Constantini* to the brief overview of the emperor's imperial theocracy he had outlined in the *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*. The oratio was used in the east in its original Greek version, and later in the century, it was available in the west in a Latin translation. The late Roman emperors had a tough model to imitate in the real or in the idealized Constantine, but they largely followed his policies and completed the Christianization of the Roman Empire.<sup>59</sup>

The Germanic invasions of the fifth century resulted in the division of the once-united Roman world into the Byzantine Empire of the Orthodox East and the Barbarian Europe of the Latin West. Constantine remained an idealized model for Christian rulers in both regions, with some essential differences. Although fanciful stories were added to his biographical details, Constantine was largely remembered as the defender of Christian orthodoxy, as the builder of Christian Constantinople, and as the model for the ideal Byzantine emperor. He was seen as the vice-regent of God on earth, who had defended the state and protected



Ill. 19 A drawing of Eusebius in his study with a manuscript (*Biblical Archeological Review*).



Ill. 20 The modern Faith Mosque above the ruins of the ancient *Hagiai Apostoloi* church on the highest hill of Constantinople where Constantine was buried in his Christian capital.



the faith. In Byzantine mosaics and orthodox icons, he was often depicted as dedicating Christian cities to Christ or presiding over councils with bishops. Through the eleven centuries of the Byzantine Era, there were eleven emperors who bore the name of Constantine. Sovereigns who ruled effectively over the state and the church were saluted as “new Constantines,” while empresses who devoted themselves to pious actions were hailed as “new Helenas.” In the eastern Orthodox communions, Constantine and Helena are both revered as saints, and many houses of worship are named in their honor (Ills. 21 & 22).

Barbarian Europe was a fragmented region that had suffered the loss of Roman administration and a serious decline in culture by the early Middle Ages. The Popes had survived at Rome, were residing in an imperial palace, and were attempting to convert and civilize the peoples of the barbarian kingdoms around them. Constantine was remembered as a great general and the builder of the apostolic basilicas at Rome, but the real imperial theocrat of Lactantian

and Eusebian writings—or his successors in the east—was eclipsed by a legendary figure more palatable to the politically ambitious papacy. In a superstitious culture that preferred the miraculous to the mundane, a story gradually arose that made Constantine a persecutor who had come to Rome with leprosy. Pagan priests had instructed him to bathe himself in the blood of two thousand babies if he wished to be healed. But Peter and Paul had appeared to him in a dream and urged him to find pious Bishop Sylvester in the hills outside the city for a more humane cure. The emperor searched for and found his episcopal healer and, having been baptized by him, was cured of his disease and converted to Christianity. In gratitude to the saintly Pope, he handed over control of Rome and the western provinces to the papacy, and retired to Constantinople to rule only the east thereafter. This fictional version of Constantine had arisen gradually from the fifth to the eighth centuries in biographies of Sylvester and in the “Donation of Constantine.” It suited the needs of the Roman See which ultimately constructed a



Ill. 21 Byzantine mosaic depicting Constantine at the right presenting the fourth century walled city of Constantinople and Justinian at the left offering the sixth century domed cathedral of *Hagia Sophia* to Mary and Christ (Vestibule of the Warriors in *Hagia Sophia*, 10th c.).



Ill. 22 Traditional Orthodox icon depicting Constantine presiding over the Christian bishops debating theology at the Council of Nicaea (Museum of Zakynthos, 17th c.).





Ills. 23 and 24 Two of the frescoes in the fictitious Western story of Constantine depicting the emperor handing over his imperial crown with control of Rome and the West to the Pope ("The Donation of Constantine"); and, the emperor then serving as a groom to the Pope before departing for the east (Chapel of St. Sylvester, 13th c.).



Ill. 25 Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Vision of Constantine* statue on the Scala Regia staircase off to the far right side of the narthex of *San Pietro in Vaticano* (Vatican, 1669).

Papal World Monarchy theory. This version of Constantine's story finally made its way into a series of beautiful frescoes in the Chapel of St. Sylvester in thirteenth century Rome. The popes of the Middle Ages encouraged European kings to be like Constantine—a devoted son of the papacy who honored the clergy, endowed churches, opposed heresy, and went on crusades—if they wished to be great and successful rulers in Christendom (Ills. 23 & 24).

About the time Constantinople was being conquered by the potent armies of the Ottoman Turks in the East, the "Donation of Constantine" was being overcome by the critical scholarship of Lorenzo Valla in the West. And since the Renaissance, modern researchers have gradually worked back through the mists of medieval legends to the historic

emperor Constantine, who initiated Christian imperial theocracy. To the credit of the modern popes, they have corrected the fallacies of their medieval predecessors, and finally honored their original imperial benefactor by commissioning a more historically accurate rendering of Constantine's revelation and Christian conversion, which they have placed in a prominent position at the front end of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Bernini's Baroque "Vision of Constantine" statue dramatically recreates the celestial vision that transformed Constantine into an emperor with a mission in A.D. 312 (Ill. 25).<sup>60</sup>

#### NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Dr. Martin Miller, the symposium chair of the Rocky Mountain European Studies Conference, and his fellow presenter, Dr. Hans Pohlsander, and the conference organizers and participants for their comments.



2. Constantine's pre-Christian political ideologies and religious evolution can best be seen in *Panegyrici VI (VII), VII (VI), & VIII (V)*, La. texts and Fr. trs. by E. Galletier in *Panegyriques Latins*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1952), and La. texts and Eng. trs. by C.E.V. Nixon & B.S. Rodgers in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors—The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley, 1994); and less clearly in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* I. 11–27, Gk. text ed. by F. Winkelmann in *Eusebius Werke*, I.1, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Berlin, 1975), and Eng. tr. by E.C. Richardson in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (New York, 1890; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1986). For modern analyses, see: Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), pp. 26–41; and Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London & New York, 2004 Hb, 2006 expanded Pb), pp. 72–97.
3. The Christian authors Euseb., in *Vita Const* I. 27–40, and Lactantius, in *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 44, La. text & Eng. tr. by J.L. Creed, *Lactantius: De Mortibus Persecutorum in Oxford Early Christian Texts* (Oxford, 1984), emphasize the revelatory experiences of the emperor before the battle; while the pagan authors of *Paneg IX (XII)*, and Zosimus, *Historia Nova* II. 14–17, Gk. text ed. by L. Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1887), & Eng. tr. by R.T. Ridley (Melbourne, 1982), focus on the military details of campaign. Constantine's subsequent patronage of Christianity, his use of Christian symbols in imperial art, and his epistolary references to the power of Christian symbols buttress the veracity of his conversion experience. For modern accounts, consult: A.H.M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 69–90; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 40–43, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 98–108.
4. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 32 & 42.
5. The most detailed study on Ossius and his relationship with Constantine is by Victor C. De Clercq, *Ossius of Cordova* (Washington, D.C., 1954). Calcidius, the Latin translator of the *Timaeus*, praised the intelligence and learning of the bishop in his dedication, while De Clercq, *Ossius*, pp. 59–79, quotes that dedication and discusses the education of Ossius. Constantine later compared the Platonic concept of the first and second deity to the Christian God the Father and Christ the Son in his *Oratio ad Coetum Sanctorum* 9, Gk. text ed. by I. Heikel in *GCS*, vol. 7 (Leipzig, 1902), with Eng. tr. by E.C. Richardson in *NPNF*, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (New York, 1890; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1986). Ossius was mentioned by name in an imperial epistle of Constantine offering monetary subsidies to bishops—in Euseb., *Historia Ecclesiastica* X. 6; in a law on the manumission of slaves in churches—in *Codex Theodosianus* IV. 7. 1, La. text ed. by Th. Mommsen, *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1905), with Eng. tr. by Clyde Pharr in *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmundian Constitutions* (Princeton, 1952); and by ecclesiastical historians for his role in the Arian theological conflict and Council of Nicaea—e.g., in Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I. 7, and Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I. 16, Gk. texts ed. by J.-P. Migne in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 67 (Paris, 1859), with Eng. trs. by A.C. Zenos and C.D. Hartranft in *NPNF*, 2nd ser., vol. 2 (New York, 1891; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1989). Most modern scholars have judged Ossius to have been an advisor to Constantine on Church affairs, as per example: L. Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, 4th ed., vol. 2 (Paris, 1907) = *Early History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (London, 1912), pp. 48–50, & 109–22; De Clercq, *Ossius*, pp. 148ff.; Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 74–75, 87, 91, & 123–36; Ramsay MacMullen, *Constantine* (New York, 1971), pp. 102–07, 131, & 168–79; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 43, 51–56, 74, 212–17, & 225–26; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 112–14, 131, 167, 172, 192–99, & 208–09. The Roman pontificate of Miltiades was recorded in the ancient *Liber Pontificalis* XXXIII, La. text ed. by L. Duchesne in *Le Liber Pontificalis* (Paris, 1955), with Eng. tr. by R. Davis in *Translated Texts for Historians*, vol. 6, *The Book of the Pontiffs: Liber Pontificalis to A.D. 715* (Liverpool, 1989); while Euseb., *Hist Eccl* X. 5. 18–20, preserved the “Epistle of Constantine to Miltiades” requesting him to adjudicate the African schism. The pontificate of Miltiades is surveyed in modern works by James T. Shotwell and Louise R. Loomis, *The See of Peter* (New York, 1927), pp. 448–62; Nicholas Cheetham, *Keepers of the Keys* (New York, 1983), p. 17; & Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes* (San Francisco, 1997), pp. 56–57. The contention of B.H. Warmington that Constantine did not use Christian clergy as advisors in “Did Constantine have ‘Religious Advisors’?”, *Studia Patristica*, vol. 19 (1989), pp. 117–29, is untenable on the basis of the ancient sources.
6. Laws in the *Codex Theodosianus*, coin issues, and hints in the literary sources—esp. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 42–48—placed Constantine in Trier during August and early autumn of 313, from November of 313 to June of 314, and from late October of 314 to the end of April 315. See the chronology of Constantine's itineraries and residences in Timothy D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), pp. 71–72, for details.
7. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 80, La. text ed. by C.A. Bernoulli (Freiburg, 1895), with Eng. tr. by E.C. Richardson in *NPNF*, 2nd ser., vol. 3 (New York, 1892; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1969), and *Chronicon*, Olymp 274, ed. by R. Helm in *Eusebius' Werke 7: Die Chronik des Hieronymus in GCS*, vol. 47 (Berlin, 1956) placed Lactantius in extreme old age in Gaul as the *magister* of Constantine's son Crispus. For the career and works of Lactantius, consult: R. Pichon, *Lactance: Étude sur le mouvement philosophique et religieux sous le règne de Constantin* (Paris, 1901); J. Stevenson, “The Life and Literary Activity of Lactantius,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. I, 1 (1957), pp. 661–77; Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Latin Church* (Stanford, 1964), pp. 61–86; T.D. Barnes, “Lactantius and Constantine,” *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 63 (1973), pp. 29–46; Charles M. Odahl, *Early Christian Latin Literature* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 67–68; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 2000); and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 125–29.
8. Lact., *Div Inst* I. 3, La. text ed. by S. Brandt & G. Laubmann in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 19 (Vienna, 1890), with Eng. tr. by W. Fletcher in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7 (New York, 1886; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1970). Martial analogies for the *Deus Summus* were fairly common in the militaristic age of the late Roman world—for examples and modern commentary, see: Ramsay MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 1967), p. 39; Charles Odahl, “A Pagan's Reaction to Constantine's Conversion—Religious References in the Trier Panegyric of A.D. 313,” *The Ancient World*, vol. 21 (1990), p. 54, and “God and Constantine: Divine Sanction for Imperial Rule in the First Christian Emperor's Early Letters and Art,” *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 81, 3 (1995), p. 345.
9. *Div Inst* VII. 26. 11–17, with the words in italics reading in Latin: “Sanctissime imperator . . . te Deus Summus ad restituendum iustitiae domicilium et ad tutelam generis humani excitavit . . . Te providentia Summae Divinitatis ad fastigium principale provexit . . . Nec immerito rerum Dominus ac Rector te potissimum delegit per quem sanctam religionem suam restauraret . . . Erat igitur congruens ut in formando generis humani statu te auctore ac ministro Divinitas uteretur . . .”
10. In *Div Inst* I. 1 and V. 24, Lactantius proclaimed that imperial power was a gift from God, and that rulers who abused their positions would suffer divine vengeance. On this theme in Lactantius, consult: Norman H. Baynes, “Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*,” *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1960), pp. 346–54; and for the biblical background on this (esp. Paul's teaching in *Rm* 13: 1–7), see the classic works of Cecil John Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World* (Edinburgh, 1925; rept. 1955); Kenneth M. Setton, *Christian Attitude Towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century* (New York, 1941; rept. 1967), and Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1966); and the new book by Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, The Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford, 2005).
11. The indebtedness of Constantine to ideas and phrases in the *Institutes* can be seen in his Donatist *Epistles* and in his *Oration to the Assembly of Saints*, and has been noted by many scholars, including: MacMullen, *Constantine*, pp. 125–31; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 73–76; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1987), pp. 659–61 & 680–81; Odahl, “God and Constantine,” pp. 336–41; Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, pp. 136–38; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 126–29, 134–36, 138–41, 144–46, 192, & 268–69.
12. *De Ira Dei* 2. Stevenson, “Life and Literary Activity of Lactantius,” pp. 674–75. Mary F. McDonald, *Lactantius: The Minor Works* (Washington, D.C., 1965), pp. 59–60, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 128, date this work to 313–14.
13. *De Ira Dei* 5, 6, 8, & 10–20, as in: “Deus . . . et iustos diligit, et impios odit” (19); and “noxios punit, nec patitur longius procedere, cum eos inemendabiles esse perviderit” (20).
14. Palanque, “Sur la date du *De Mortibus Persecutorum*,” *Mélanges offerts à J. Carcopino* (Paris, 1966), pp. 711–16, dated the composition of this work to the years 313–15 when Lactantius was most likely serving at the court in Trier. Jones, *Constantine*, p. 80, Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 44–46, and Creed, *Lactantius*, pp. xxxiii–xxxv, agree; but Barnes, in “Lactantius and Constantine,” pp. 29–46, & *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 13–14, while accepting this dating, placed Lactantius and the writing of the tract in the east. As the influence of Lactantius on Constantine seems too profound to have been merely literary, and the statements by Jerome on the tutoring of Lactantius at the court in Gaul best fit this period, I have agreed with the former scholars in my *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 128. Baynes, in “Lactantius, the *Divine Institutes*,” in *Byzantine Studies*, pp. 346–53, sees

- the gory deaths chronicled in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* as the *ultio* (divine vengeance) predicted in the *Divinae Institutiones*.
15. Themes and phrases from the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* were particularly evident in the letters Constantine issued in 324–25 to the eastern provinces in the aftermath of his victory over Licinius—recorded in Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 24–42, 46, & 48–60.
  16. Lact., *Div Inst* I. 3 & 19, and IV. 29–30 = Odahl, *Early Christian Latin*, pp. 68–71.
  17. Lact., *Div Inst* III & IV *passim*.
  18. Eusebius recorded the restitutions in *Hist Eccl* X. 5. 15–17, the subventions in *Hist Eccl* X. 6, & *Vita Const* I. 42, and the exemptions in *Hist Eccl* X. 7—with the latter also in the *Codex Theod* XVI. 2. 2 = Odahl, *Early Christian Latin*, pp. 105–06. For modern analyses of the initial legislative favors of Constantine for the Church in 312–13, consult: J. Gaudemet, “La législation religieuse de Constantin,” *Revue d’histoire de l’église de France*, vol. 33 (1947), pp. 26–32, wherein he posits that “Toutes les constitutions relatives à l’Église catholique lui font une place privilégiée dans la société romaine”; J.R. Palanque, *The Church in the Christian Roman Empire* (New York, 1953), pp. 5–7, who states that the “restitutions, exemptions and subventions constituted exceptional favours for the Christian Church in the West, and went far beyond the attitude of tolerant indifference which the emperors had shown in the course of previous years”; Clémence Dupont, “Les privilèges des clercs sous Constantin,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 62 (1967), pp. 729–35; Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, pp. 46–52; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 49–50, wherein he claims that Constantine “changed the legal status of the Church and its place in Roman society,” and lifted “Christianity to a privileged position among the religions of the Roman Empire”; Simon Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, A.D. 284–324* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 153–55, & 162; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 114–16.
  19. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 44–45, and *Hist Eccl* X. 5 commented upon and provided some documents from the Donatist Schism, while Optatus, *Libri VII de Schismate Donatistarum cum Appendix Decem Monumentorum Veterum ad Donatistarum Historiam Pertinentium*, La. text ed. by C. Ziwsa in the *CSEL*, vol. 26 (Vienna, 1893), with Eng. tr. by O.R. Vassall-Phillips, *St. Optatus* (London, 1917), offered a history of the movement and attached important documents concerning it to his work. For modern works, see: W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford, 1986); Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997); Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 54–61; H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, MD, 2000), pp. 212–31; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 129–41.
  20. In Euseb., *Hist Eccl* X. 5. 21–24, and in Optat., *De Schis Donat*, App 3 respectively.
  21. Optat., *De Schis Donat*, App 3 = Odahl, *Early Christian Latin*, pp. 113–17, with the italicized words reading in Latin: “commoveri possit Summa Divinitas . . . in me ipsum, cuius curae nutu suo caelesti terrena omnia moderanda commisit. . . . Tunc enim revera et plenissime potero esse securus et semper de promptissima benevolentia Potentissimi Dei prosperissima et optima quaeque sperare, cum universos sensero debito cultu Catholicae religionis Sanctissimum Deum concordii observantiae fraternitate venerari. Amen.” Norman Baynes, in *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church* (London, 1929; rept. New York, 1975), pp. 10–12, and Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 96–97, both note that fear of the Christian Deity was a key element in the religious thinking of Constantine; Odahl, in “God and Constantine,” pp. 344–45, agrees and pinpoints the origin of this fear in his “readings in biblical texts and Lactantian works, and his analysis of recent political events under the influence of the themes therein, [which] were obviously affecting Constantine’s definition of his imperial role.”
  22. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 44 (quoted above) and the report of the council to Pope Sylvester clearly indicated that Constantine participated in the Council of Arles. Optat., *De Schis Donat*, App 4, contains the report of the council to Pope Sylvester, and App 5 has the letter of Constantine to the bishops. For modern accounts, consult: Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 97–98; Frend, *Donatist Church*, pp. 151–52; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 58; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, pp. 219–31; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 136–39.
  23. Optat., *De Schis Donat*, App 7 = Odahl, *Early Christian Latin*, p. 122, contains the “Epistle of Constantine to Celsus the Vicar of Africa,” with the words above reading in Latin: “Quid potius agi a me pro instituto meo ipsiusque principis munere oportet, quam ut discussis erroribus omnibusque temeritatibus amputatis, veram religionem universos concordemque simplicitatem atque meritatem Omnipotenti Deo culturam praesentare perficiam?”; Augustine, in *Epistulae* 43 & 88, La. texts ed. by J.-P. Migne in the *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1841–49), with Eng. trs. by J.G. Cunningham in the *NPNF*, 1st ser., vol. 1 (New York, 1886; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1974), records the imperial involvements in the struggle and Constantine’s final ruling for the Catholics. For modern accounts of the events of 314 to 316, and Constantine’s growing sense of mission, see: Baynes, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 10–28; Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 98–103; Hermann Dörries, *Constantine the Great* (New York, 1972), pp. 38–39; Frend, *Donatist Church*, pp. 153–59; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 58–60; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 137–41.
  24. The “Epistula Constantini ad Episcopos Catholicos” was preserved in Optat., *De Schis Donat*, App 5 = Odahl, *Early Christian Latin*, pp. 117–20. While Otto Seeck questioned the authenticity of many of the documents preserved in the *Appendix* of Optatus in “Quellen und Urkunden über die Anfänge des Donatismus,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 10 (1889), pp. 505–68, their authenticity was defended by Louis Duchesne in “Le dossier du Donatisme,” *Mélanges d’archéologies et d’histoire de l’école française de Rome*, vol. 10 (1890), pp. 589–650, and by Norman Baynes in “Optatus,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 26 (1924), pp. 37–44. While the authenticity question was thereafter no longer in doubt, a few scholars, such as Heinz Kraft, *Kaiser Konstantins religiöse Entwicklung* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 46–61, and Frend, *Donatist Church*, pp. 152–53, doubted that Constantine could have written or dictated the specifically Christian terminology in the “Epistle to the Bishops” without clerical assistance. In a detailed analysis of the religious progress and education of Constantine and his use of Christian terminology in contemporary and subsequent compositions in an article on “Constantine’s Epistle to the Bishops at the Council of Arles: A Defense of Imperial Authorship,” *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 17, 3 (1993), pp. 274–89, I proved that the emperor had the knowledge and was in a position to have employed such Christian terms in 314. Since then, my views have been accepted by virtually all scholars writing about this era, as for example, Simon Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, A.D. 284–324* (Oxford, 1996), p. 304; T.G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, PA, 1996), p. 30, note 15; and Digeser, *Making of a Christian Empire*, p. 171.
  25. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 48, mentioned Constantine’s *Decennalia* in Rome; and the anniversaries of imperial arrivals, games, and departures listed in the *Codex Calendar of 354*, printed in *CIL*, vol. I, pp. 268 & 272, along with laws posted in the *Codex Theod* I. 2. 2., X. 1. 1., & XI. 30. 3, place Constantine in Rome from 21 July to 27 September of 315—cf. Barnes, *New Empire*, pp. 72–73, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 141–61.
  26. The *Decennalia* medallion is listed in Patrick M. Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. VII: Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313–337* (London, 1966), p. 364, #36. Numismatic analyses of it and its imagery are provided by: A. Alföldi, “The Initials of Christ on the Helmet of Constantine,” *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allen Chester Johnson* (Princeton, NJ, 1951), pp. 303–11, & “Das Kreuzzepter Konstantins des Grossen, Schweizerische Münzblätter,” vol. 4, 16 (1954), pp. 81–86; Kronrad Kraft, “Das Silbermedaillon Konstantins des Grossen mit dem Christusmonogramm auf dem Helm,” *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* (1954–55), pp. 151–78; P. Bruun, “Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine,” *Arctos*, ser. 2, vol. 3 (1962), pp. 8–10, & 23–24; M. Pierre Bastien, “Le chrisme dans la numismatique de la dynastie constantinienne,” *Collectionneurs et collections numismatique* (Paris, 1968), pp. 112–13, & “The Horse’s Head and Imperial Bust on Roman Coins,” *Journal of the Society for Ancient Numismatics*, vol. 14, 1 (1983), pp. 6–8; Charles Odahl, “Christian Symbolism in Military Motifs on Constantine’s Coinage,” *SAN*, vol. 13, 4 (1982–83), pp. 67–68; and Wendelin Kellner, “Christuszeichen auf Münzen der Zeit Konstantins I und seiner Söhne,” *Money Trend* (September, 1999), pp. 52–53. Several scholars have seen the Christian symbolism on this medallion as graphic confirmation on Constantine’s conversion, and an early attempt of the emperor to portray in art what he was writing in his Donatist epistles—e.g., Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, pp. 42–43; MacMullen, *Constantine*, p. 113; Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 42–43; Odahl, “God and Constantine,” pp. 347–50, & *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 144–46.
  27. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 48.
  28. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 42, and *Liber Pont XXXIII* are the ancient literary sources for Constantine’s Roman churches. Modern works dealing with archaeological investigations at the church sites include Richard Krautheimer, “The Constantinian Basilica,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, #21 (1967), pp. 115–40; Richard Krautheimer and S. Corbett, “The Constantinian Basilica of the Lateran,” *Antiquity*, vol. 34 (1960), pp. 201–06; Bruno M. Apollonj Ghetti,



- La tomba e le basiliche di San Pietro al Vaticano* (Rome, 1954); Engelbert Kirschbaum, *The Tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul* (London, 1959); Richard Krauthammer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, NJ, 1980); Charles Odahl, "The Christian Basilicas of Constantinian Rome," *AncW*, vol. 26, 1 (1995), pp. 3-28; R. Ross Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (New Haven, CT, 2004); and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 146-61.
29. Among the ancient sources, the *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* 5. 13-19, La. text and Eng. tr. by J.C. Rolfe in *Amianus Marcellinus*, vol. 3, *Loeb Classical Library* (London, 1964), and Zos., *Hist Nova* II. 17-20, offer the most details on the political maneuvers and military conflicts between Constantine and Licinius, while Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 49-II. 6, covers the rising religious tensions in these years. For modern commentary, consult: Hans A. Pohlsander, "The Date of the *Bellum Cibalense*: A Re-examination," *AncW*, vol. 26, 1 (1995), pp. 89-101; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 66-68; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 162-65.
  30. For the different coin types employed by the emperors and the appearance of Christian symbols on Constantinian coinage in this period, see in general: Bruun, *RIC*, Vol. VII, *passim*, and R.A.G. Carson, *Coins of the Roman Empire* (London, 1994), pp. 158-66; and in particular: Bruun, "Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine," pp. 5-21, Bastien, "Le chrisme dans la numismatique de la dynastie constantinienne," pp. 111-14, Odahl, "Christian Symbolism in Military Motifs on Constantine's Coinage," pp. 67-68, and Kellner, "Christuszeichen auf Münzen der Zeit Constantins I und seiner Söhne," pp. 52-55. Some of Constantine's legislation in favor of Christianity can be found in *Codex Theod* I. 27. 1 (appeals to bishops), II. 8. 1 (Sunday holiday), IV. 7. 1 (slave manumissions), and in Euseb., *Vita Const*, *passim*, and in Soz., *Hist Eccl* I. 8-9; while the persecution of Licinius against the Christians is covered in Euseb., *Hist Eccl* X. 8, & *Vita Const* I. 49-II. 2; Soc., *Hist Eccl* I. 3; Soz., *Hist Eccl* I. 7; and hinted at in *Origo* 5. 20. For modern treatments, consult: Gaudemet, "La législation religieuse de Constantin," pp. 38-48; Palanque, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, pp. 57-58; Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 111-12; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 50-52, & 68-70; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 166-74.
  31. *Origo* 5. 20 & 21 mentioned both *casus belli*: "repentina rabie suscitatus Licinius omnes Christianos a palatio iussit expelli"; and "sed hoc Licinius contra fidem factum questus est, quod partes suae ab alio fuerint vindicatae"; while Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 56-II. 5 emphasized the religious differences between the emperors, and Zos., *Hist Nova* II. 21-22 concentrated on their military preparations; cf. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 174-77.
  32. Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 6-17, *Origo* 5. 23-29, and Zos., *Hist Nova* II. 22-28 are the most useful ancient sources for these battles, while Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 113-15, MacMullen, *Constantine*, pp. 134-38, Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 55-59, Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 76-77, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 177-82, provide modern reconstructions of the war; cf. Barnes, *New Empire*, pp. 72-76, for the residences and itineraries of Constantine as he moved eastward between 316 and 324.
  33. Victor, *De Caesaribus* 41. 10, La. text ed. by F. Pichlmayr (Leipzig, 1911), with Eng. tr. by H.W. Bird in *TTH*, vol. 14 (Liverpool, 1994), reported that Constantine and his sons now ruled the empire unchallenged, while the coin portraits and inscriptions of the time as recorded in Bruun, *RIC*, Vol. VII, *Nicomedia & passim*, recorded the new positions and titles for the family. *Origo* 6. 30 placed the rebuilding of Byzantium into Constantinople in the years after the victory over Licinius ("ob insignis victoriae memoriam"). For these things, see: Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 208-212, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 182, & 232ff.
  34. Euseb., in *Vita Const* II. 23-60, summarized Constantine's acts in favor of Christianity at this time, and included three of the imperial missives in his text (II. 24-42, II. 46, & II. 48-60).
  35. Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 28 & 29—with some words italicized for emphasis. The *ὁ θεράπων τοῦ θεοῦ* is Eusebius' Greek equivalent for Constantine's Latin *famulus Dei* ("the servant of God") seen in many imperial epistles from 314 onward. For the Lactantian tone of this edict and the emperor's conviction that he was the chosen instrument of divine will and had a "special service" to perform as "the servant of God," consult: Baynes, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 14-16; Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, pp. 82-85; Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 61-67; and Odahl, "Constantine's Epistle to the Bishops at the Council of Arles," pp. 279-81, "God and Constantine," pp. 336-41, and *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 182-85.
  36. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 49-III. 20 reflected the apocalyptic climate of the war era, and reported on the emperor's actions to establish Christianity as the official religion of the state. For the latter actions, see: Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 208-12; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 182-86. In his *Vita Const* III. 3, Eusebius described the pierced dragon imagery on the palace tableau, while Bruun, *RIC*, Vol. VII, p. 572, #19 lists the surviving coin motif. For the literary and artistic uses of apocalyptic dragon/serpent imagery in this period, consult: Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (London, 1955), pp. 272-75; MacMullen, *Constantine*, pp. 136-37; Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 58-67; Glenn Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, 2nd ed. (Macon, GA, 1986), pp. 164-74; and Charles Odahl, "The Use of Apocalyptic Imagery in Constantine's Christian Propaganda," *Centerpoint*, vol. 4, 3 (1981), pp. 9-19, and *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 176-77, 181-82, & 201.
  37. Euseb., in *Vita Const* II. 48-60, preserved this Constantinian "Edict to the People of the Provinces concerning the Error of Polytheism." Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 61-67, read this edict as a pronouncement from Constantine that his subjects "should follow him on the way of the new era [and] should renounce the old error and turn to the truth"; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 210-12, emphasized the way "Constantine uses harsh language throughout [and] continually denounces paganism"; may have allowed the pagans "to worship their traditional gods only in the Christian sense" thereafter—prayers but no sacrifices; and that "Christianity was now the established religion of the Roman Empire"; Drake, in *Constantine and the Bishops*, pp. 244-45, has interpreted it as a manifesto for "a policy of peace and unity" between Christians and pagans, which "renounced the use of coercion to compel belief." Unfortunately, Drake's analysis overlooked the major thrust of the edict which was the ardent defense of the truths of Christianity against the falsehoods of paganism—with toleration given to the pagans only out of political necessity, and because of "the rebellious spirit of those wicked errors . . . obstinately fixed in the minds of some." Drake has long overemphasized the dichotomy between the private beliefs and public policies of Constantine, and deemphasized his programs of patronage and propaganda in support of Christianity as correctly presented in Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*.
  38. Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 61-III. 6, Soc., *Hist Eccl* I. 5-8, Soz., *Hist Eccl* I. 15-17, and other Church writers, such as Theodoret, Athanasius, and Philostorgius, provided background information on the Arian Controversy and the calling of the Nicene Council. For modern works, consult: J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1978); Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, MI, 2001); R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988); Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 212-15; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 188-96.
  39. Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 64-72, recorded the "Epistle of Constantine to Alexander the Bishop, and Arius the Presbyter"; and III. 12, quoted his "Address to the Council concerning Peace"; several 5th c. Church historians included these and others in their works as well.
  40. Although an official contemporary account of the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea has not survived, enough material has been preserved in Euseb., *Vita Const* III, Soc., *Hist Eccl* I, Soz., *Hist Eccl* I, and other ancient Christian authors, such as Athanasius, Galesius, Theodoret, and Philostorgius, that a general reconstruction of its events and actions can be made. For modern scholarship on this, see: Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 231-37; Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 152-78; Richard Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God* (New York, 1999), pp. 68-88; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 214-19; Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 194-201; and the new work by Lewis Ayers, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York & Oxford, 2004).
  41. Barnes, *New Empire*, pp. 76-80, provides a chart with key source references for the imperial residences and journeys of Constantine in these years; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 202-76, offers the most detailed narrative reconstruction of this period.
  42. Euseb., *Vita Const* III. 15-16.
  43. *Codex Theod* XV. 12. 1 contains the gladiatorial law; while *Codex Theod* IX. 24. 1, IX. 8. 1, & IX. 7. 2 have the sexual morality legislation. Eusebius and most of the other ancient Christian authors covered up the dynastic tragedy to protect Constantine, but the pagan authors of Victor's *Epitome de Caesaribus* 41. 11, La. text ed. by F. Pichlmayr (Leipzig, 1911), and of Zosimus' *Hist Nova* II. 29. 2 played it up to stain the reputation of the emperor. For modern accounts, consult: Otto Seeck, "Die Verwandtenmorde Constantin's des Grossen," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftlichen Theologie*, vol. 33 (1890), pp. 63-77; Hans A. Pohlsander, "Crispus: Brilliant Career and Tragic End," *Historia*, vol. 33 (1984), pp. 79-106; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 219-21; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 202-09.

44. Alfred R. Bellinger, *Roman and Byzantine Medallions in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, DOP, #8* (Washington, D.C., 1964), fig. 13, pp. 135–36, shows and describes the silver medallion depicting Constantine holding and piously gazing at the Christian Labarum which was issued for the *Vicennalia* at Rome in July 326. *Liber Pont XXXIII*. 16–20 described the *Basilica Beato Petro Apostolo* built by Constantine, and the dedication inscription which seems to indicate that it was dedicated by the emperor and his mother in the summer of 326. For a detailed reconstruction of these and other Christian actions by the imperial family in Rome at this time, see: Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 208–10.
45. Euseb., *Vita Const* III. 17–47, & 51–53, and other Christian authors of late antiquity, waxed eloquent on the pilgrimages of the imperial ladies and the Constantinian building programs in and around Jerusalem. For detailed modern accounts, consult: E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, A.D. 312–460* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 1–49; Hans A. Pohlsander, *Helena: Empress and Saint* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 84–116; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land—An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1998), *passim*; & Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 211–20.
46. Origo 6. 30 reported: “Constantine renamed Byzantium after himself on account of the memory of his notable victory (ob insignis victoriae memoriam). He adorned it . . . with great magnificence and desired it to be equal to Rome (Romae desideravit aequari)”; Eutropius, in his *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita* X. 8, 1a. text ed. by C. Santini (Leipzig, 1979) with Eng. tr. by H.W. Bird in *TTH*, vol. 14 (Liverpool, 1993), agreed, writing “he was the first to endeavor to raise the city named after himself to such a height as to make it rival Rome.”
47. Euseb., *Vita Const* III. 48–49, & IV. 58–60, Soc., *Hist Eccl* I. 16, Soz., *Hist Eccl* II. 3, Origo 6. 30, Zos., *Hist Nova* II. 30–32, & 35–36, and the *Chronicon Paschale*, years 328 & 330, Gk. text ed. by L. Dindorf in the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn, 1832), with Eng. tr. by Michael & Mary Whitby in *TTH*, vol. 7 (Liverpool, 1989), contain some of the best ancient and early Byzantine evidence for the building program of Constantine at Constantinople; while R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1964), Gilbert Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris, 1974), Richard Krauthammer, *Three Christian Capitals—Topography and Politics in Rome, Constantinople and Milan* (Berkeley, 1983), Garth Fowden, “Constantine’s Porphyry Column: The Earliest Literary Allusion,” *JRS*, vol. 81 (1991), pp. 119–31, Joseph Alchermes, “Constantinople and the Empire of New Rome,” in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. by Linda Safran (University Park, PA, 1998), pp. 13–38, MacMullen, *Constantine*, pp. 141–56, Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 68–76, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 232–44, & 268–76, combine the ancient literary sources with modern archaeological investigations, and offer excellent reconstructions of the 4th century city.
48. *Vita Const* III. 48, mentioned the consecration to the “God of the martyrs”; *Chronicon Paschale*, 330, recorded the date of 11 May and the ceremony at the hippodrome. Among modern scholars, Andrew Alföldi, “On the Foundation of Constantinople: A Few Notes,” *JRS*, vol. 37 (1947), pp. 10–16, Dörries, *Constantine the Great*, pp. 68–76, Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 222–223, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 243–44, seem to have most accurately interpreted the intentions of Constantine in building Constantinople.
49. Origo 6. 31–34, and Euseb., *Vita Const* IV. 5–6, mentioned the Gothic and Sarmatian campaigns; legal subscriptions in the *Codex Theodosianus*, gold coin issues, and references in the literary sources, esp. Euseb., *Vita Const* IV, place Constantine in Constantinople for many months at a time in most of the years between 330 and 337—on this, see: Barnes, *New Empire*, pp. 78–80, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 245–76.
50. Euseb., in *Vita Const* I. 44, characterized Constantine as a “general bishop (*koinós episkopos*) constituted by God”; and in IV. 24, recorded the emperor’s statement that he had been appointed by God as a “bishop for the things outside” (*episkopos . . . tōn ektōs*). For modern analyses of these phrases, consult: W. Seston, “Constantine as a ‘Bishop,’” *JRS*, vol. 37 (1947), pp. 127–31; Jones, *Constantine*, p. 169; J. Straub, “Constantine as KOINOS EPISKOPOS,” *DOP*, #21 (1967), pp. 37–55; Daniel de Decker and Ginette Dupris-Masay, “L’*épiscopat* de l’empereur Constantin,” *Byzantion*, vol. 50 (1980), pp. 118–57; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 246–47.
51. Euseb., *Vita Const* IV, listed and praised many of these policies, and *Codex Theod*, *passim*, preserved many of emperor’s Christian laws; pagan authors, such as Eutrop., *Brev* X. 8, and Zos., *Hist Nova* II. 30–39, on the other hand, criticized Constantine’s legislation and building programs. For the laws, see: Gaudemet, “La législation religieuse de Constantin,” pp. 25–61; and for his church construction programs, see: Richard Krauthammer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New Haven, CT, 1986), pp. 68–78. In *Vita Const* IV. 15, Eusebius described the “prayer pose” coinage in this manner: “he directed his likeness to be stamped on the golden coin of the empire with the eyes uplifted as in the posture of prayer to God; and this money became current throughout the Roman world.” The upward gaze pose had Hellenistic antecedents, but no one in the Roman world of the 330s could doubt to which Divinity Constantine was praying. For the “prayer pose” and other Christian coin motifs, consult: Odahl, “Constantinian Coin Motifs in Ancient Literary Sources,” pp. 1–15, and *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 247–49.
52. Euseb., *Vita Const* IV. 7, 46, & 48–50, recorded some of the events, and commented on the crowds in the capital for the *Tricennalia*. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 253–55, and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 265–67, offer modern reconstructions.
53. Eusebius recorded his meetings and interactions with Constantine, and quoted many of the public and private letters he had received from the emperor throughout the latter parts of the *Vita Constantini*. Among the many useful works of modern scholarship dealing with Eusebius, see: Robert M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford, 1980); Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981); Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, 2nd ed. (Macon, GA, 1986); Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley, 1991); and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London, 2004 & 2006).
54. Euseb., *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini* prologue, Gk. text ed. by I. Heikel in *GCS* (Leipzig, 1902), with Eng. trs. by E.C. Richardson in *NPNF*, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (New York, 1890; rept. Grand Rapids, MI, 1986), and H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius’ Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley, 1976).
55. Euseb., *Oratio de Laud Const* 1–5: “*tō mīmema tēs monarchikēs exousias*” = Constantine’s Christian empire is thus “the [earthly] copy of the heavenly monarchy” - 5.
56. Euseb., *Oratio de Laud Const* 6–10: “*tis ὑποφθέτης τοῦ πambasiléous theou*” = Constantine is “an interpreter of the Almighty God” - 10.
57. For some insightful modern scholarship on this subject, consult: Norman Baynes, “Eusebius and the Christian Empire,” *Byzantine Studies*, pp. 168–72; Setton, *Christian Attitude Towards the Emperor*, pp. 40–56; Dwornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, vol. 2, pp. 611–58; J.-M. Sansterre, “Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie ‘césaropapiste,’” *Byzantion*, vol. 42 (1972), pp. 131–95, & 532–94; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 253–55; Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 53–65; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, pp. 372–84; and Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 265–67.
58. Euseb., *Vita Const* IV. 58–71, provided the most detailed ancient report; while Jones, *Constantine*, pp. 195–200, Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 259–60, Garth Fowden, “The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and Their Influence,” *JRS*, vol. 84 (1994), pp. 146–70, David Woods, “Where Did Constantine Die?” *JTS*, n.s., vol. 48, 2 (1997), pp. 531–35; & Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 274–76, offer modern accounts.
59. The Church historians Socrates and Sozomenus and the pagan historian Zosimus were among the ancient authors who carried the story of the Christian Church and the Roman Empire up into the next century. For modern treatments of late antiquity, see: A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Norman, OK, 1964); Glanville Downey, *The Late Roman Empire* (New York, 1969); Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971); W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1985); Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993); and Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CT, 1997).
60. Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat, in *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views—A Source History* (London, 1996), pp. 97–146, chronicle the reception of the *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius in the Byzantine East, and offer a translation of one of the later and more fanciful biographies of Constantine; while Timothy E. Gregory, in *A History of Byzantium* (Malden, MA, 2005), offers an excellent history of the eleven hundred years of the Byzantine Empire after Constantine. Mark Edwards, in *Constantine and Christendom*, *TTH*, vol. 39 (Liverpool, 2003), pp. xl—xlvi, & 92—115, details the emergence of the papal friendly and fictitious Constantine and the “Donation of Constantine” in the barbarian West, and provides a translation of the latter; while Brian Tierney, in his classic *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300–1475*, 6th ed. (Boston, 1999), offers the best history of the millennium of medieval Europe. For recent books on



Constantine with extensive bibliographies of both ancient sources and modern scholarship, consult: T.G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, PA, 1996); H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, MD, 2000); Noel Lenski, Ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, 2006); and Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London, 2004 Hb, 2006 expanded Pb).